



March 23, 2021

Honourable Dr. John Haggie
Minister of Health and Community Services
P.O. Box 8700
1st Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Haggie:

I am writing this letter to urge you to confirm publically the vaccination timeline for teachers and other staff who work in our province's schools.

In recent discussions with Education Minister Tom Osborne, he confirmed that essential service workers are included in Phase 2 of the vaccine rollout, but he was unable to give any indication as to when teachers, as members of this group, will receive their vaccinations.

The importance of maintaining limited contacts outside of your family bubbles and your "tight 10" has been clearly stated by Public Health officials. Yet those who work in our education system are unable to do this. The concept of cohorts as envisioned and described by Public Health does not match the reality of our province's schools. I would invite you or any Public Health official to visit any school with K-9 students in this province and observe what occurs at lunchtimes and dismissal. Cohorts cannot be maintained in the strict manner described in the media briefings. This is particularly evident at the Junior High level.

When you have a group of individuals, like teachers, who, by the very nature of their profession, have no choice but break their bubbles on a daily basis, the need for vaccination prioritization becomes apparent.

Other jurisdictions, most recently New Brunswick, have clearly articulated their plans when it comes to vaccinating teachers. I am imploring you to begin the process of doing so here as well.

The importance of vaccinating teachers has been stated by the United Nations. On separate dates in December 2020, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued statements calling for the prioritization of teachers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a directive that all states immediately make teachers, school staff, and childcare workers eligible for COVID-19 vaccination across all vaccination providers.

The NLTA recognizes vaccination plans are determined by supply, but being clear with teachers as to where they stand on the priority list in Phase 2 will go a long way to alleviate the fear and anxiety that exists within our membership currently. Teachers have been on the frontlines since COVID-19 appeared in the province, and they deserve transparency moving forward.

I am asking that Government prioritize teachers and other school staff for vaccination in as timely a manner as possible. The stability of the education system and a full, sustainable return to in-school classes depends on this.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dean Ingram
President

- c. Honourable Tom Osborne, Minister of Education
Honourable Andrew Furey, Premier